Manasquan, 1942

WAG-273
ex-*Aetna*; ex-*Oscar J. Lingeman*; ex-*Lake Catherine*

An inlet off the coast of New Jersey.

Builder: Toledo Shipbuilding Company, Toledo, Ohio

Length: 261'

Beam: 43' 6"

Draft: 16' 5"

Displacement: 2,580-tons

Cost: $600,000 (conversion)

Commissioned: 1918 (commercial); 4 October 1918 (USN); 11 October 1941 (USN); 2 April 1942 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 22 February 1945

Disposition: Sold

Machinery: 1 3-cylinder triple-expansion steam engine; 2 Scotch-type boilers; 1,200 SHP; single propeller

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 10.0 knots
Cruising: 8.0 knots; 7,500 mile range

Complement: 58

Armament: 1 x 4"/50 (single); 2 x 20mm/80 (single); 2 x depth charge projectors

Electronics:

History:

The *Manasquan* (AG-36) was originally built in 1918 as the *Lake Catherine* by Toledo Shipbuilding Company in Toledo, Ohio. She was taken over by the U.S. Shipping Board at New York City on 4 October 1918 and commissioned the same day for duty with LCDR Richard F. McNabb, USNRF, in command. After steaming to Norfolk and back to load cargo, *Lake Catherine* departed New York in convoy 19 October and steamed to Rochefort, France, where she arrived 10 November. Assigned to coaling duty, she operated between British and French ports until 24 February 1919 when she arrived Rotterdam, Holland. Two days later she began service for the U.S. Food Administration. While en route to Danzig, Germany, she rescued nine survivors 3 March after the German trawler *Berthold* struck a mine and sank. *Lake Catherine* continued food relief runs until 5 July when she departed Barry, Wales, for the United States. Loaded with general military cargo, she arrived New York 8 August. S he decommissioned 15 August and was returned to the USSB the same day.

Subsequently, *Lake Catherine* resumed merchant service. She was renamed *Oscar J. Lingeman* in 1926 and *Aetna* in 1937. *Aetna* was purchased by the Maritime Commission from her owner, Mid-West Transportation Co., Inc., Bay City, Michigan, in 1941. She transferred to the Navy on 14 October 1941. She was renamed *Manasquan* (AG-36) on 15 October 1941. She was converted for use as a weather patrol ship by Bethlehem Steel Company in East Boston, Massachusetts and commissioned under loan to the U.S. Coast Guard on 2 April 1942.

Manasquan served the important but little praised weather patrol stations in the stormy, U-boat-infested North Atlantic. Equipped with special meteorological instruments, she plied her assigned patrol areas out of Boston, and Argentia, Newfoundland. Braving dangers of the sea and submarines, she operated in isolation -for weeks at a time to collect valuable weather data used in forecasting weather for the Atlantic area, North Africa, and Axis-occupied Western Europe. Realizing the strategic importance of data collected by weather patrol ships such as *Manasquan*, the chief of the U.S. Weather Bureau wrote during World War II: ". . . the weather reports from these vessels were among the most vital meteorological information for war operations of the United Nations. . . . The difficulty and hardships of service on these station vessels was fully recognized but the value of their reports more than compensated for those difficulties, and the men so serving were performing duties of high priority in the war effort."

In addition, *Manasquan* took part in the initial at-sea testing of LORAN (LOng Range Aids to Navigation) system, which became of inestimable value both to

naval and merchant ships and to military and commercial aircraft as a highly accurate and reliable electronics position finding system, LORAN emerged to become a revolutionary navigation aid in all kinds of weather and at great distances from land. As a result of experiments conducted by MIT's Radiation Laboratory, by the Bell Telephone Laboratory, and by the National Defense Research Committee during the final months of American neutrality in 1941, the impetus for the nurturement and full development occurred in the hectic months after Pearl Harbor. Under RADM Julius A. Furer, USN, coordinator of research and development for the Secretary of the Navy, the Navy provided "active and aggressive sponsorship" for the project, CAPT Lawrence M. Harding, USCG, who later coined the word loran, played an important role in the research aspects of its development.

By June 1942 the system was ready for environmental testing. From mid-June to mid-July *Manasquan*, equipped with special receiving instruments, successfully carried out the first shipboard tests which proved the feasibility and practicality of the system. As a result of these tests, construction and completion of the important seven-unit northwest Atlantic chain, which extended from Delaware to Greenland, was completed in less than a year.

Manasquan continued weather patrol duty during the remainder of World War II. She collided at dock with the CGC Cactus, causing considerable damage to the tender. In mid-1943 she was rebuilt at the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, as a gunnery practice ship. On 7 October 1944 she collided with the SS *Edward Pearce*, causing only slight damage but destroying her sonar array. The Navy permanently transferred her to the Coast Guard on 22 October 1943, and she continued to serve as *Manasquan* (WAG-273). Her name was struck from the Navy list 30 October 1943. From 29 August 1944 to 22 February 1945 she was assigned to the Coast Guard Academy and used for training duty.

Following the end of the war, she was decommissioned on 22 February 1945 and was sold 11 March 1946.

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.